



Milwaukee County

Supervisor Elizabeth M. Coggs, 10th District

Chair, Finance & Audit Committee

Chair, Task Force on Work Reform for Men

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TASK FORCE AND CONSULTANT ARE TOOLS TO ADDRESS UNEMPLOYMENT

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel coverage fails to address real problems facing urban families

Milwaukee, WI – Milwaukee County Supervisor Elizabeth M. Coggs, Chair of Milwaukee County's Task Force on Work Reform for Men, is responding to this morning's *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* coverage of the Task Force and consultant Gerard Randall.

"The article provided slanted one-sided coverage of two Milwaukee County contracts. It's evident that the author chose to focus on one consultant while ignoring the many other consultants who do business with Milwaukee County," said Supervisor Coggs. "It's clear that articles like these are written by individuals who do not live in my district and are unfamiliar with the dire straits currently being experienced by my constituents. They do not walk in the shoes of men and women of color seeking employment. Although a few of my colleagues on the County Board are out of touch with urban unemployment, many Supervisors do understand we are beyond recession. My inner-city district is in a full-fledge depression."

The Task Force on Work Reform for Men is aggressively exploring creative new methods to employ men of color in Milwaukee County. The Task Force is working with the State of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Public Schools, the YWCA and other community-based organizations to create and maintain jobs for African-American and Hispanic men living in Milwaukee County. The following statistics underscore the why these actions are necessary:

- The incarceration rate for African-Americans in Wisconsin is more than 10 times the rate for whites, higher than any other state. African-Americans make up only 5.7% of Wisconsin's total population but account for 38.8% of the State's incarcerated population.
- The poverty rate for African-American and Hispanic males in Milwaukee County is four times the rate of white males.
- As a catalyst to building strong families and economic growth, more emphasis must be placed on males as heads of households in order to become productive tax-paying citizens within Milwaukee County.

“We’re not making these numbers up. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and other respected institutions have found that Milwaukee’s African-American unemployment rate is the 2nd highest in the nation,” Supervisor Coggs said. “The Task Force and Mr. Randall are both tools that we use to identify employment opportunities for these individuals. We need to do everything we can to improve the employment picture for Milwaukee County families.”

“The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and other major media outlets routinely fail to cover the positive efforts made possible through this Task Force and Mr. Randall. We organized and hosted a job fair last month at the Silver Spring Neighborhood Center that attracted more than 1,000 people competing for just 100 available jobs,” Supervisor Coggs added. “This morning’s article neglects to mention our successful partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools, which results in hundreds of summer jobs that would not have been possible without Mr. Randall’s assistance. Last year, 250 young people were employed through this program.” The Task Force has also held two “Milwaukee County Crisis: We Have Got To Do Something Radical” Roundtable Forums to brainstorm ways to address these major community problems.

“As civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer once said, 'I am sick and tired of being sick and tired.' Disenfranchisement continues in 2009. The major players in Milwaukee continue to ignore the disparities for individuals of color, especially men and those who have been incarcerated. There is a great amount of need in the community. We’re trying to develop solutions to the unemployment problem,” Supervisor Coggs concluded. “The newspaper fails to play a role in solving these problems and instead chooses to undermine these efforts by manufacturing controversy.”

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